

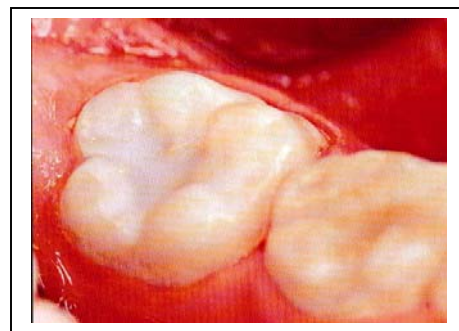
Dental Sealants

“effective in the primary prevention of tooth decay”¹

Nevada State Oral Health Advisory Committee

Community Coalition for Oral Health

**Northern Nevada Dental Coalition
for Underserved Populations (CUSP)**



What is the Public Health Issue?

Oral health is integral to general health.² Although preventable, tooth decay is a chronic disease affecting all age groups. In fact, it is the most common chronic disease of childhood.² The burden of disease is far worse for those who have restricted access to prevention and treatment services. Tooth decay, left untreated, can cause pain and tooth loss. Untreated decay has been associated with difficulty in eating and being underweight.³ Untreated decay and tooth loss can have negative effects on an individual’s self esteem and employability.

***In the U.S. tooth decay affects:*³**

- ✓ 1 in 4 elementary school children
- ✓ 2 out of 3 adolescents
- ✓ 9 out of 10 adults

What is the impact of sealants?

Sealants are a plastic material placed on the pits and fissures of the chewing surfaces of teeth where up to 90% of decay occurs in school children.⁴ Sealants prevent tooth decay by providing a physical barrier between the teeth and decay-causing bacteria. Therefore, they serve to prevent the development of tooth decay. According to the Surgeon General’s Report on Oral Health in 2000, sealants have been shown to reduce decay by over 70%.² They are estimated to be 100% effective if the sealant is fully retained on the tooth.² The combination of sealants and fluoride has the potential to virtually eliminate tooth decay.⁵ Sealants have also been shown to be cost effective when used in children at increased risk of tooth decay.⁶

How is Nevada doing?

A 2003 survey revealed that 33% of Nevada third graders had at least one dental sealant. Almost 67% of Nevada’s third graders had experienced tooth decay.⁷

What is Nevada doing?

In 2002, the Nevada State Health Division Oral Health Program partnered with Saint Mary’s Foundation, the Nevada Dental Hygienists’ Association, the Community College of Southern Nevada (CCSN) Dental Hygiene program and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas School of Dental Medicine to provide participating schools with classroom based oral health instruction, oral health screening, and dental sealant application. The Statewide Dental Sealant Program provides dental sealants to second graders in schools based on the percentage of children eligible for the free and reduced meal program. The program has targeted 113 schools, mostly in rural counties and in Southern Nevada where there hasn’t been any active school-based sealant program. In Northern Nevada, Saint Mary’s Take Care-A-Van program has been providing sealants

***Healthy People 2010 objective:*⁸**

- ✓ Increase sealants in 8 year old first molars and 14 year old first and second molars to 50%.
- ✓ Reduce decay experience in children under 9 years old to 42%.

***Healthy Nevada 2010 objective:*⁹**

- ✓ Increase the percentage of children who have received dental sealants on their molar teeth to 50%.

in schools for approximately five years. From July 1, 2000 through February 13, 2003, the program reached 48 schools in Northern Nevada. 5,099 sealants were placed; 10,902 second grade students received classroom instruction; 6,778 received visual screening; and 2,690 were referred for restorative care.

In 2002, the Task Force on Community Preventive Services, an independent, non-federal, multi-disciplinary task force appointed by the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), strongly recommended school sealant programs as an effective strategy to prevent tooth decay.³ The CDC further estimates that if 50% of children at high risk participate in school sealant programs such as Nevada's, then over half of their tooth decay would be prevented and money would be saved on their treatment costs.⁴

Strategies for Nevada's future:

- ✓ *Continue to promote, fund, and support expansion of existing and establishment of new school-based dental sealant programs.*
- ✓ *Continue to promote, fund, and support expansion of community-based programs, such as water fluoridation.*
- ✓ *Support the expansion of the Statewide Dental Sealant Program to include the 6th grade.*
- ✓ *Increase public and provider awareness of the effectiveness of sealants to increase demand for and utilization of sealants for all children.*

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